

REMARKS

Claims 2-4 and 6-8 have been amended. Claims 1 and 5 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. New claims 17 and 18 have been added. Accordingly, claims 2-4, 6-8 and 17-18 are currently pending.

Priority

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's acknowledgment of the claims for priority. Submitted herewith is a certified copy of the priority document (JP2001-075241, filed March 16, 2001, along with its verified English translation). An indication that these documents have been safely received would be appreciated.

35 U.S.C. §102(a)

The rejection of claims 1, 3 and 4 under 35 USC 102(a) as being anticipated by EP-1,101,524 (hereinafter referred to as EP '524) has been rendered moot by the submission of a verified translation of the foreign priority document thereby antedating this cited document. This is being done to expedite prosecution of this application and is not to be interpreted as an acquiescence to the rejections made by the Examiner.

35 U.S.C. §103(a)

The rejection of claims 1-8 under 35 USC 103 as being unpatentable over EP '524 in view of EP 1,027,918 (hereinafter referred to as EP '918) has also been rendered moot for the reasons stated above due to the filing of a verified translation of the foreign priority document.

With respect to the rejection of claims 1-8 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over EP 0,885,648 (hereinafter referred to as EP '648) or Rossin et al (U.S. Patent No. 6,069,291), either in one in view of EP '918, Applicants respond as follows.

The present invention is directed to a method for treating perfluorocompounds in which discharged gas containing acid gases resulting from the decomposition of the perfluorocompounds is brought into contact with either water or an aqueous alkaline solution to remove the acid gases from the discharged gas. The mists contained in the discharged gas are separated by whirling the discharged gas after contact with either the water or the aqueous alkaline solution. The discharged gas separated from the mists is sucked by a jet stream of an injected gas, thereby ejecting the sucked gas. Specifically, the separation of the mists containing the

discharged gas is carried out by whirling the discharged gas. The advantages provided by the present invention are disclosed, by way of example only, on page 3, lines 14-23 of the present specification.

Furthermore, the separation of mists containing the discharged gas can be achieved by an apparatus having a simpler structure than the mist-separating device, aeration stirring tank 5, etc., disclosed in EP '918. This is because, according to the present invention, the separation of mists contained in the discharged gas is carried out by whirling the discharged gas. This further avoids the need of a demister 9 as disclosed in the EP '918 patent.

EP '648 discloses a method of decomposing perfluorocompounds contained in a discharged gas with a catalyst. This reference also discloses bringing the discharged gas containing an acid gas formed by the decomposition of the fluorine compounds into contact with an alkaline solution to remove the acid gas. However, this reference does not disclose or suggest the whirling of the discharged gas to separate the mists containing the discharged gas.

Rossin et al disclose a process for transforming perfluoroalkanes contained in discharged gas in the presence

of an oxidizing agent and water. Rossin et al also disclose the removing of the acid gas contained in the discharged gas by caustic scrubbing. Just as with EP '648, there is no disclosure nor suggestion of whirling the discharged gas to separate the mists contained in the discharged gas.

Finally, the same is true for EP '918. This reference discloses a process for treating exhaust gases by introducing perfluorocompound-containing exhaust gases discharged from a semiconductor production device into an aeration stirring tank employing an aqueous alkaline liquid to remove compounds contained in the discharged gas, such as BCl_3 , $\text{Li}(\text{OC}_2\text{H}_5)_4$, etc. During this process, the formed mists are removed in an aeration stirring tank. In order to remove ammonia, a gas-liquid contact device 7 and a demister 9 are provided downstream of the aeration stirring tank. EP '918 also fails to cure the deficiencies in the remaining references by also not disclosing the whirling of this discharged gas to separate the mists contained in the discharged gas.

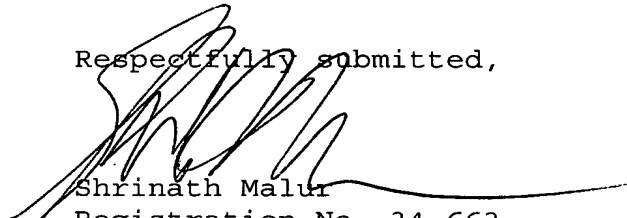
As such, since none of the prior art references disclose the whirling of the discharged gas to separate the mists contained in the discharged gas, one of ordinary skill in the art would not be motivated by these references to modify their

teachings to arrive at the presently claimed invention absent hindsight reconstruction.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants contend that the above-identified application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, reconsideration and reexamination are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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Date: February 9, 2004